

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6315

228

April 15, 2019

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

The U.S. House Small Business Committee prides itself on partnering with other policymakers to foster a healthy economic environment for our nation's small businesses. We hear from them every day, and many of them convey their concerns about conditions that hurt their ability to compete and excel in the modern economy. Access to broadband is an important condition for small businesses to grow and expand their business. As we heard in a Small Business Committee hearing focused on boosting rural digital opportunities, small e-commerce businesses in rural America suffer from inconsistent coverage and must either resort to using their cellphone as a hotspot or cease distribution until they can connect. When small businesses cannot maintain operations in rural America, it impacts the viability of rural communities and their ability to attract young families and compete in the digital economy. We are writing today to share our concerns about the digital divide and offer several ideas we believe will help expand broadband connectivity.

Our interactions with small business owners and entrepreneurs in every corner of the country have confirmed that the lack of access to affordable high-speed broadband is a pervasive issue that is stifling innovation and hindering economic growth. We applaud the Commission's efforts to find ways to improve broadband mapping data and urge the Commission to move swiftly to achieve greater granularity and increased accuracy. If given the opportunity, small businesses and would-be entrepreneurs across the country would take advantage of broadband quality internet if it was available to them.

We encourage the Commission to take the necessary steps to improve its data collection methods. Accurate broadband maps will ensure that federal funds will serve the communities that need them most. As members of Congress, we look forward to working with FCC on those data collection methods that will provide more context and assist in defining a more complete picture of the state of broadband availability.

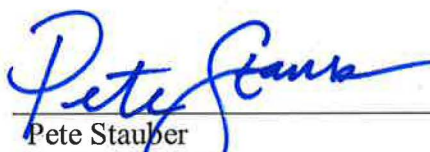
Furthermore, we have heard from small business owners who are enthusiastic about new and innovative technologies, such as TV white spaces technology (TVWS), that provide them with access where there is a deficit or lack of fiber-optic solutions. Adopting a mixed technology model that provides access to more unlicensed and shared spectrum opportunities for innovators to develop new technology helps close the digital divide. It is our understanding that the Commission has taken some steps in this area. However, there are still several regulatory barriers hindering the broader deployment of alternative broadband technology. It is also our hope that new technologies will not just increase access but also produce affordable options. We encourage the FCC to continue exploring ways to maximize access to unlicensed and shared spectrum in rural areas and reduce regulatory roadblocks to the availability of TVWS technology.

We appreciate your continued and tireless attention to the digital divide. The House Committee on Small Business is ready to work with the Commission to tackle the remaining roadblocks in the way of broadband deployment across the country. Please respond to our offices by May 15, 2019 with the FCC's plan to foster innovative ways to close the digital divide. Thank you again, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Jared Golden
Chairman
Contracting and Infrastructure
Subcommittee



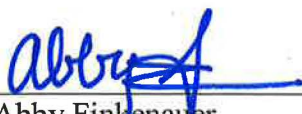
Pete Stauber
Ranking Member
Contracting and Infrastructure
Subcommittee



Nydia M. Velázquez
Chairwoman
Committee on Small Business



Steve Chabot
Ranking Member
Committee on Small Business



Abby Finkenauer
Chairwoman
Rural Development, Agriculture,
Trade, and Entrepreneurship
Subcommittee



Troy Balderson
Ranking Member
Innovation and Workforce
Development
Subcommittee



Andy Kim
Chairman
Economic Growth, Tax and Capital
Access
Subcommittee



Tim Burchett
Member of Congress



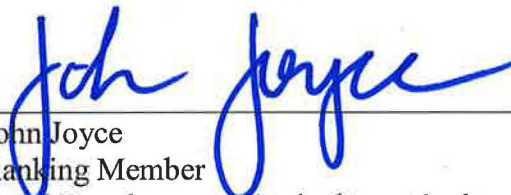
Jason Crow
Chairman
Innovation and Workforce
Development
Subcommittee



Ross Spano
Ranking Member
Investigations, Oversight and Regulations
Subcommittee



Sharice Davids
Member of Congress



John Joyce
Ranking Member
Rural Development, Agriculture, Trade,
and Entrepreneurship
Subcommittee



Marc Veasey
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Michael O'Rielly, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission
The Honorable Brendan Carr, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission
The Honorable Geoffrey Starks, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Abby Finkenauer
U.S. House of Representatives
124 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Finkenauer:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

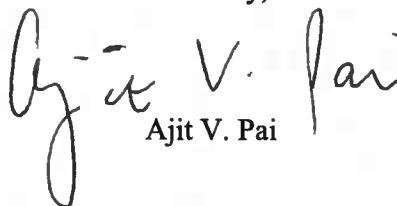
Additionally, I agree that maintaining updated and accurate broadband deployment data is critical to bridging the digital divide. We need to understand where broadband is available and where it is not in order to target our efforts and limited funding to areas that are most in need. Accordingly, in an August 2017 Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, the Commission began to take a focused look at reforming the FCC Form 477 process—the principal tool used by the Commission to gather data on communications services, including broadband services. We wanted to explore revising aspects of the data collection to increase its usefulness to the Commission, Congress, the industry, and the public. We continue to look into ways to collect and use accurate data from any source, including consumers themselves, to assemble a reliable map. As you may know, the Commission's Speed Test App is one way consumers can participate in collecting data about broadband deployment, and our staff are examining if it could be leveraged to better understand wireless broadband network performance.

I also agree with you that unlicensed spectrum in the TV white spaces—those channels on which no broadcaster is broadcasting—promises an opportunity for new wireless broadband deployments. And I am encouraged that after the Commission's recent action in the docket (namely, a March Report and Order and Order on Reconsideration resolving a number of outstanding issues), Microsoft has engaged with the broadcast community to seek a new rulemaking on further steps we can take to improve the use of this spectrum.

Page 2—The Honorable Abby Finkenaer

Please let me know if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

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Ajit V. Pai



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Adriano Espaillat
U.S. House of Representatives
1630 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Espaillat:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

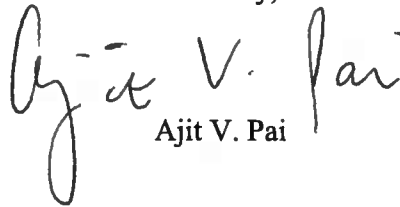
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Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Andy Kim
U.S. House of Representatives
1516 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Kim:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

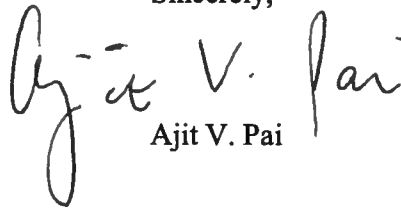
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Page 2—The Honorable Andy Kim

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Ajit V. Pai



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Brad Schneider
U.S. House of Representatives
1432 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Schneider:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

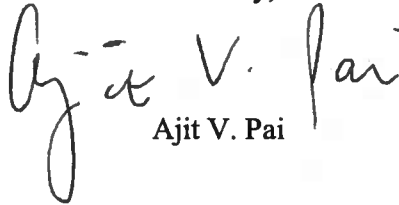
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Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Jared Golden
U.S. House of Representatives
1223 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Golden:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

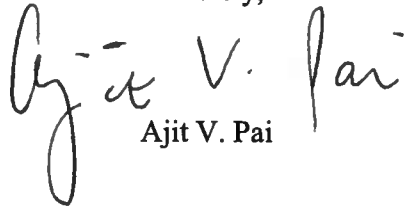
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Page 2—The Honorable Jared Golden

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Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Jason Crow
U.S. House of Representatives
1229 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Crow:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

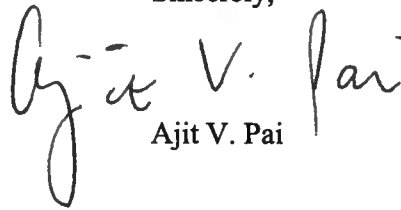
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Page 2—The Honorable Jason Crow

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Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 14, 2019

The Honorable John Joyce
U.S. House of Representatives
1337 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Joyce:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

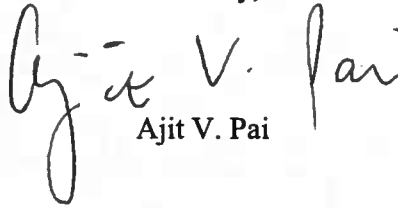
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Page 2—The Honorable John Joyce

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Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Marc Veasey
U.S. House of Representatives
1519 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Veasey:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

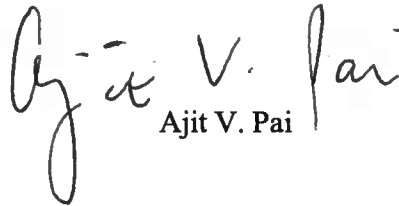
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Page 2—The Honorable Marc Veasey

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Ajit V. Pai



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Nydia M. Velazquez
Chairwoman
Committee on Small Business
U.S. House of Representatives
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Velazquez:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

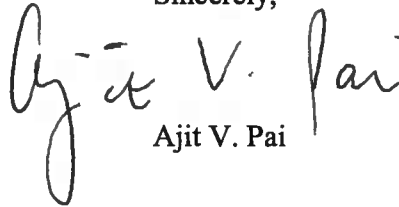
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Page 2—The Honorable Nydia M. Velazquez

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Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Pete Stauber
U.S. House of Representatives
126 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Stauber:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

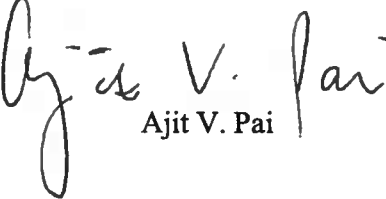
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The Honorable Ross Spano
U.S. House of Representatives
224 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Spano:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

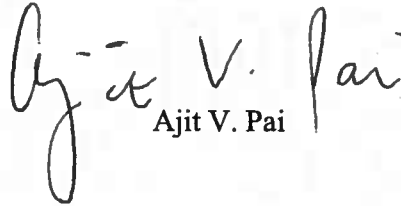
Additionally, I agree that maintaining updated and accurate broadband deployment data is critical to bridging the digital divide. We need to understand where broadband is available and where it is not in order to target our efforts and limited funding to areas that are most in need. Accordingly, in an August 2017 Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, the Commission began to take a focused look at reforming the FCC Form 477 process—the principal tool used by the Commission to gather data on communications services, including broadband services. We wanted to explore revising aspects of the data collection to increase its usefulness to the Commission, Congress, the industry, and the public. We continue to look into ways to collect and use accurate data from any source, including consumers themselves, to assemble a reliable map. As you may know, the Commission's Speed Test App is one way consumers can participate in collecting data about broadband deployment, and our staff are examining if it could be leveraged to better understand wireless broadband network performance.

I also agree with you that unlicensed spectrum in the TV white spaces—those channels on which no broadcaster is broadcasting—promises an opportunity for new wireless broadband deployments. And I am encouraged that after the Commission's recent action in the docket (namely, a March Report and Order and Order on Reconsideration resolving a number of outstanding issues), Microsoft has engaged with the broadcast community to seek a new rulemaking on further steps we can take to improve the use of this spectrum.

Page 2—The Honorable Ross Spano

Please let me know if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is fluid and stylized, with the first name "Ajit" being the most prominent part.

Ajit V. Pai



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Sharice Davids
U.S. House of Representatives
1541 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Davids:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

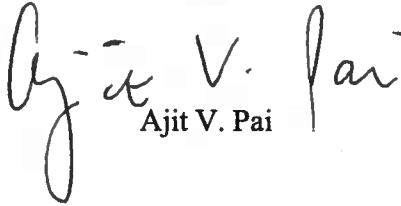
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Page 2—The Honorable Sharice Davids

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Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Steve Chabot
Ranking Member
Committee on Small Business
U.S. House of Representatives
B343-C Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Chabot:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

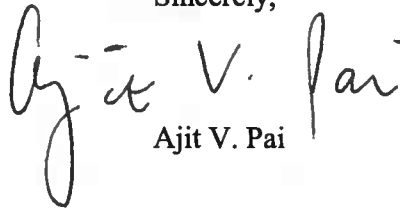
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Page 2—The Honorable Steve Chabot

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Sincerely,

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Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Tim Burchett
U.S. House of Representatives
1122 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Burchett:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

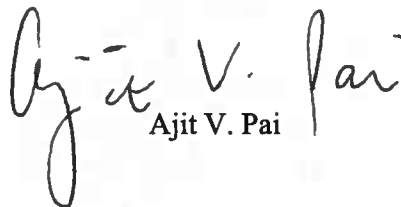
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Page 2—The Honorable Tim Burchett

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Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Troy Balderson
U.S. House of Representatives
1221 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Balderson:

Thank you for your letter regarding access to broadband for small businesses, especially in rural America. I share your view that high-speed Internet access is critical to economic opportunity, job creation, education, and civic engagement. That's why we encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with fiber on an expedited basis, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support, among other things. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where the case to build out broadband is already challenging for most businesses.

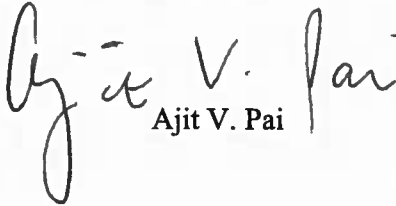
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Page 2—The Honorable Troy Balderson

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Ajit V. Pai